

# The Guru-Shishya Parampara

## A Broader View

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### Three Basic Considerations

In my opinion, the argument begins from the title itself. Indian art-music, seriously mentioned today as an alternative system in the world of music, is certainly the immediate cause of the proposed discussion of guru-shishya parampara, but the discussion would be less substantial if we hold that Indian art-music is the only system which originated, shaped and employed guru-shishya parampara. Music is a specific kind of phenomenon, music-reception is a value-experience and music-making is a creative endeavor in numerous cultures. If the parampara has, as is generally suggested, an intrinsic relationship with music then, it cannot be ruled out that the said Parampara might have close parallels in other music-traditions.

Secondly, in view of the nature of the processes involved, guru-shishya parampara cannot be assumed to be confined to music alone. In a lighter vein, one would remember that in Shudraka's *Mricchakatika*, which is one of the most realistic of Sanskrit plays, Sharvilak, a romantically inclined thief invokes Kartikeya as guru of those keen on quicker circulation of wealth! More seriously, even today, all traditional craftsmen speak of a specific deity as well as a guru as their guide. The use of guru-shishya parampara in these areas cannot be merely coincidental. Even when the narrower i.e. musical application is considered, the existence of guru-shishya parampara in non-elite categories of performing arts can hardly be ignored. To draw attention to the wider framework of guru-shishya parampara would therefore mean casting the net wide enough to move out of art-music, which only constitutes a small part of the total musical reality in India. If this perspective is not adopted it may be difficult to make sense of the situation obtained today - which brings me to the third basic consideration.

Admittedly, the present discussion is necessitated because the system has undergone modifications - both welcome and not so welcome - during the recent past. Guru-shishya parampara, like many other concepts related to music, has become a charged entity - providing a sure sign of its cultural status. At the same time, super emotional charge on a concept also indicates that Indians have a psychological

complex about it! Such a situation hampers the much-desired free, cool and periodic reappraisal. The re-examination of guru-shishya parampara is needed because it is in fact a strategy directly concerned with communication of multiple messages, disposition of energies of younger minds and influencing of new (including non-Indian) entrants to Indian cultural citizenship. Today, human minds are poised for a new take-off - mainly due to changing modes and conditions of socio-cultural communications, as also of societal continuity and collectivity. Under the circumstances, it is important to examine guru-shishya parampara afresh, as a pervasive, durable, comprehensive and participation-friendly cultural mode. My effort is in that direction.

### Examination of Terminological Clusters - An Investigative Tool

The depth of every cultural phenomenon is indicated by terminological clusters it gives rise to and guru-shishya parampara is no exception. Of course, some care is necessary to distinguish between mere words and terms. In brief, words are language-units confined to being members of language-behaviour of a society while terms are ambitious words because they are not limited to one field of life, and more importantly, because they are pointers to definite Ideas. Further, broadly speaking, terms are of two types: technical and critical. Technical terms usually denote specific components, parts, structural details and the like, while critical terms refer to phases, processes and states which bring to the fore essentially quality-aspects. In durable and living traditions, such as the Indian, terms also provide an axis to a historical perspective. Though we lack dictionaries compiled according to historical principles, an effort to examine the terms in the context of maximum number of musical categories offer clues to language layers and thereby valuable insights into the developmental sequences in music. An additional dimension is provided when care is taken to note Sanskrit as well as Prakrit terms. Better minds would certainly be able to do justice to the intricate expressive web woven by Indian languages as a whole and also work on other types of terms. All kinds of terms, taken together, reflect behavioural map or pattern of the concerned society.

Applying this strategy to explore the guru-shishya parampara, it becomes possible to tabulate following terms - though somewhat loosely classified:

Sanskrit	Hindi	Marathi	Persian/ Urdu/ Arabic etc.
Guru	गुरु, उस्ताद Guru, Ustad	गुरु Guru	पीर, उस्ताद, मुर्शिद Peer, Ustad, Murshid
Shishya	शिष्य, शागिर्द Shishya, Shagird	शिष्य Shishya	मुरीद Murid

Guru-shishya-parampara	गुरु-शिष्य परंपरा Guru-shishya parampara	गुरु-शिष्य परंपरा Guru-shishya parampara	पीरी-मुरीदी,उस्तादी-शागिर्दी, रिवायत Piri-Muridi, Ustadi-Shagirdi, Riwayat
Guru-krama	गुरु-क्रम Guru-krama		सिलसिला Silsila
Guru-shishya-shikshan Paddhati	गुरु-शिष्य-शिक्षणपद्धती Guru-shishya- shikshanPaddhati	गुरु-शिष्य-शिक्षणपद्धती Guru-shishya- shikshanPaddhati	सीना-बसीना Sina-basina
Gurukul	गुरुकुल Gurukul	गुरुकुल Gurukul	मकताब, मदरसा, खानकाह Makatab, Madarasa, Khanqah
Guruseva	गुरुसेवा, खिदमत Guruseva, Khidmat	गुरुसेवा Guruseva	खिदमत Khidmat
Gurudakshina	गुरुदक्षिणा, नजर Gurudakshina, Nazar		नजर Nazar
Deeksha-shiksha-pareeksha	दीक्षा-शिक्षा-परीक्षा Deeksha-Shiksha- Pariksha		प्याला पीना Pyala pina
Sampradaya	संप्रदाय, घराना Sampraday, Gharana		दस्तूर, रिवाज Dastur, Rivaj
Guru-prakar/varga	गुरु-प्रकार, गुरु-वर्ग Guru-prakar, Guru- varga		
Shishya-prakar/varga	शिष्य-प्रकार, शिष्य-वर्ग Shishya-prakar, Shishya-varga		
Gurupournima	गुरु-पूर्णिमा Gurupoornima	गुरुपौर्णिमा Gurupournima	
Chhatra	छात्र Chhatra		तालिब, तालिबा, तालिब-ए-इल्म Talib, Taliba, Talib-E-Ilm
Gurumantra	गुरुमंत्र Gurumantra		बख्शीश Bakshish
Adhyayan-sthala	अध्ययन-स्थल Adhyayan-Sthala	अध्ययन-स्थळ Adhyayan-Sthala	जा-ए-मुताला, जा-ए-अमल Za-E-Mutalla, Za-E-Amal
Abhyas / Sadhana	अभ्यास, साधना Abhyas, Sadhana	अभ्यास, साधना Abhyas, Sadhan	रियाज, रीआत Riyaz, Riat
Vidya	विद्या Vidya	विद्या Vidya	इल्म Ilm
Ashirvada	आशिर्वाद Ashirwad	आशिर्वाद Ashirwad	दुआ, नवाजिश Dua, Navazish
Gurupatni / stree / bhagini / bandhu	गुरुपत्नी, स्त्री, भगिनी, बंधू Gurupatni, Stree, Bhagini, Bandhu	गुरुभगिनी, गुरुबंधू Gurubhagini, Gurubandhu	
Guruninda / apaman	गुरुनिंदा, अपमान Guruninda, Apaman	गुरुनिंदा, अपमान Guruninda, Apaman	
Gurusamman / Smaran / Pranam	गुरुसम्मान / स्मरण / प्रणाम Gurusamman /		इज्जत, याद, बंदगी Izzat, Yaad, Bandagi

	Smaran / Pranam		
Guru-pratik / chinha	गुरु-प्रतीक / चिन्ह Gurupratik / Chinha	गुरु-प्रतीक / चिन्ह Gurupratik / Chinha	
Guru-sakshatkar	गुरु-साक्षात्कार Guru-sakshatkar	गुरु-साक्षात्कार Guru-sakshatkar	
Guru-bhakti	गुरु-भक्ति Guru-bhakti	गुरु-भक्ती Guru-bhakti	अक्रीदत Aqidat
Guru-hatya	गुरु-हत्या Guru-hatya	गुरु-हत्या Guru-hatya	
Gurvadnya	हुक्म Hukma	गुर्वाज्ञा Gurvadnya	हुक्म, इजाजत Hukma, Ijazat
Gurupad / gadi / peeth	गुरुपद / गद्दी / पीठ Gurupad / Gaddi / Peeth	गुरुपद / गादी / पीठ Gurupad / Gadi / Peeth	गद्दी Gaddi
Gurudharma / kartavya	गुरुधर्म Gurudharma	गुरुधर्म Gurudharma	फ़र्ज़ Farza
Gurupadesh	गुरुपदेश Gurupadesh	गुरुपदेश Gurupadesh	वसीहत Vasihat
Vidyarthi	विद्यार्थी Vidyarthi	विद्यार्थी Vidyarthi	
Sadguru	सद्गुरु Sadguru		

### Some Terms

Guru, as a socio-cultural institution, has a long history. Some of its features may appear novel even to the contemporary performing community. For example, in the tantra tradition, women could become guru-s and receive worship etc. from disciples. However, it is to be noted that Kalhana, in his *Rajtarangini*, satirically refers to the practice of women guru-s receiving worship. Gurukula is a word which is noticeably in vogue from the period of the Vedic Sutra-grantha-s. The Gurukula system was established from this period. The guru-concept does not seem to have developed during the Mantra-period, which preceded the Sutra-period. The mantra-s were composed on inspiration or as imitation of the inspired ones. In other words, no special class had evolved to systematically teach them. When the mantra-s were systematized into samhita-s, a need arose for a class of people devoted to the task of learning, teaching, transmitting and preserving the mantra-s. The sacrifice-based religion (yadnya-pradhan-dharma) was becoming increasingly complex and that too underscored the need of a class of experts specializing in various departments (e.g. hota, adhvaryu, samagayan) related to the sacrificial religious practices. It is from the samhita-period that we have names of Acharyas- such as Angiras, Garga, Atri, Brihaspati and Vashishtha.

It is instructive to note that there were also people who did not believe in the ritualistic religion and aranyaka-s emerged to concentrate on adhyatma-vidya with importance accorded to analysis of fundamental questions about reality, nature of god, contemplation etc. Even these thought-systems needed to be taught, learnt, transmitted and preserved and guru-shishyatradition worked towards it. Janak and Yadnyvalkyia are the well-known acharya-s mentioned in this respect. Prior to the Budhha-period, eighty-two such traditions have been listed! It was inevitable that there would be numerous approaches if fundamental issues raised and hence each darshana i.e. philosophic schools had its own guru-shishya tradition. Guru-s became necessary and inevitable.

During the medieval period and after the advent of Islam, there was a marked proliferation of esoteric religious cults, including the tantra-s. Most of them being for the initiated few (therefore described asguhyadarshana-s), the institution of guru attained its highest prestige as well as inevitability. (Nirguna-sampradya, nath-sampradaya and Bouddha-siddha-s). In the natha-cult, it is the guru-vamsha and notpitru-vamsha with which one is identified. (In Bramhamda-purana it is stated: 'guru is a Shiva even though without three eyes, Vishnu, even if without four hands and Bramha despite the fact that he does not have four mouths or heads').It is instructive to note that the famous sloka *gurur brahma gururoishnu-* is from *Devi Bhagwat*.

Guru appears to be the dominant partner in the relationship under discussion. Guru is one who teaches *vedanta-shastra*. Aagamasara, a treatise, explains the three syllables in the word *guru*..

गकारः सिद्धिदः प्रोक्तोरेफः पापस्य हारकः | उकारो विष्णुव्यक्तस्त्रितयात्मा गुरुः परः |

(the 'ga' helps in accomplishing tasks undertaken the 'ra' eliminates sins, 'u' is unmanifest Vishnu. Guru includes all the three [qualities] and is therefore great.)

Panini refers to four kinds of guru-s: Acharya, Pravakta, Shrotriya and Adhyapak. Acharya was the one who taught theveda-s to disciples who had had their sacred thread ceremony. Pravakta taught brahmana-s, shrauta-sutra-s and vedanga-s. Shrotriya gavesantha of the veda-s. Adhyapak taught secular and scientific literature.

The *Devalsmriti* lists eleven types of guru-s:

आचार्यस्य पिता ज्येष्ठो भ्राता चैव महीपतिः | मातुलः श्वशुरस्त्राता माताप्रपितामहौ | वर्णज्येष्ठः पितृव्यश्च पुंस्स्येते गुरवो मतः |

The *Namchintamni* lists 12 types and the nomenclature is colourful or ecological as one may choose to describe it:

- 1) Dhatuvadi guru = Makes the disciple undertake pilgrimage and follow other helpful procedures before giving the final upadesha.
- 2) Chandan-guru = As the sandal wood spreads fragrance, even among the ordinary people, similarly this guru helps by just being near.
- 3) Vichar-guru = Teaches the disciple to think and attain realisation by pipeelika marga.
- 4) Anugraha-guru = Imparts knowledge to the disciple by anugraha i.e. Grace.
- 5) Paris-guru = The stone which when touched, turns the touched in to gold. Similarly, by mere touch, this guru gives divine knowledge to the disciple.
- 6) Kacchap-guru = The tortoise-mother nurtures her offspring by merely looking at them. Similarly this guru imparts knowledge.
- 7) Chandra-guru = There is a stone which oozes when moonlight falls on it. This guru, named after this stone, helps by the stream of compassion in his heart for the disciple.
- 8) Darpan-guru = As the mirror shows yourself to you, this guru shows your real self to you.
- 9) Chayanidhi guru = A big bird called chayanidhi soars high in the sky. The person on whom the bird's shadow falls, becomes a king. A guru whose shadow makes the disciple king of his own self / or a king of the kingdom of the inner joy is named after the bird.
- 10) Nadanidhi guru = Nadanidhi is a bead which immediately turns any metal it touches into gold. A guru turning a person into a self-realised soul the moment he prays for it.
- 11) Kraunch guru = The fabled bird only thinks of her offspring while flying in the far away regions to nurture them. Similarly the guru, takes disciples to the blessed state merely by remembering them.
- 12) Suryakant guru = The bead fires up on being touched by sunlight. Similarly, the said guru fires up disciples with the blessed state.

The tantra texts also provide some interesting typology. For example, Piscila tantra mentions diksha guru and shiksha guru with the obvious functions associated with them.

Another tantra-text, *Kulagama* refers to six types:

- 1) Preraka = one who creates an initiative about initiation in disciple's mind.
- 2) Suchaka = one who describes both initiation and practice.
- 3) Vachaka = one who describes various devices to attain the goal.
- 4) Darshak = one who explains how to discriminate between proper and improper sadhana and deeksha.
- 5) Bodhaka = explains philosophical differences between sadhana and deeksha.
- 6) Shikshak = initiates and teaches sadhana.

Sant Ramdas, with his usual thoroughness lists seventeen types of guru-s !

The guru, is regarded the metaphysical father of a disciple and is ranked higher than biological parents. Even the Bouddha monks were recommended to stay with the guru for ten years, however Buddha admitted of no other guru for himself! Some have opined that scarcity of the writing material and skill etc., along with the preponderance of oral tradition, probably contributed to guru-s growing importance. It is important to note that most of the guru-s were from grihasthasharma, very few were from vanaprastha and still fewer were sanyasin-s. It appears that institutions making monthly payment to guru-s did not come in existence till about 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, we have records to show that a guru teaching grammar, Mimamsa etc. was paid a fixed quantity of rice per year and that the one teaching vedanta got more rice than him. Kulkarni, a village administrative officer received less than guru-s. There were cases when guru-s entered into a prior contract with disciple for imparting training on a pre-determined gurudhakshina. Such guru-s were not regarded highly, and were aptly described as bhritakadhyapaka (servant-guru-s!)

Kalidasa succinctly expresses the consensus in this matter when he says in *Malavikagnimitra*:

यस्यागमः केवलजीविकार्थं तं ज्ञानपाण्यं वणिजं वदन्ति ।

(one who sells his learning for earning his livelihood is called a trader who sells his knowledge.)

The general feeling was that guru should teach a poor but deserving student free and the student should try to get free from the guru-rina through guru-dakshina.

Guru-s were expected to teach everything they knew to the disciple and hold back nothing out of the fear to be outclassed by the taught. As the aphorism puts it, one should wish for defeat from one's disciple! (शिष्यात् इच्छेत् पराजयम्) If a shishya died while doing chores for the guru, the latter had to undergo severe prayaschitta. Opinions differ on the propriety of guru's resorting to corporeal punishment to the disciple.

Gurukul - Literally means guru's dynasty or family. However, the term came to mean an institution of teaching. A student would be admitted to it after the sacred thread ceremony. The student would stay with the guru for a period of 12 years to learn the veda-s. He would be permitted to enter the grihasthashrama on completing training. The institution was accessible only to the three upper classes (Eklavya, anishad, and Karna, a charioteer's son were denied benefits of the gurukul.) However, there was apparently no discrimination between poor and rich etc. Similar

to the gurukul-s, there were also vidyashrama-s of different sages. The gurukula-s were well supported by kings who considered it their duty to make gurukula-s financially viable. Many kings established agrahara-s to ensure continued financial support to the gurukula-s. The guru-s and shishya-s lived together in the agrahara-s. I must state in anticipation that the gurukula was the direct precedent of the reputed concept of Gharana in Hindustani music - with of course the religious foundation removed for scholastic, performing as well as cultural reasons.

Guru-Dakshina - is understood to be an offering made by disciple to guru after completing training - this nearly being the final act before entering the grihastahshrama. It is to be noted that guru-s, who head different religious cults, also receive gurudakshina-s from time to time, for example, on various sacred occasions including birth, initiation, marriage, or death in the family of followers. It appears that Guru could ask for anything he desired as guru-dakshina and the shishya was expected to achieve the feat! (Koutsawas to give 14 crore gold coins to his guru Vartantu or Uttanka was asked to procure queen's (king Poshya's wife) earrings for the guru-patni, and Sandipani asked Krishna to bring back Sandipani's son - who was drowned in the sea!)

Guru-Pournima - is celebrated on the full moon day of the month of Ashadh and sage Vyasa is worshipped. As per the belief, Sankaracharya was a reincarnation of Vyasa and hence the monk-community also worships Sankaracharya. Finally, all disciples worship their respective *guru-s* i.e. those who have initiated them as also parents on this day. In the overall tradition of guru-s, Vyasa is regarded supreme and he is venerated as the source of all knowledge. (The famous sloka *vyasotcchishtam* etc.).

Guru-Mantra - is originally the mantra associated with Brihaspati. It is to be properly made (i.e. siddhi) before it can be used to fulfill wishes (ishtasiddhi). By analogy, the term is used to refer to any effective advice given by the elder or teacher etc. to the disciple etc.

The shishya, guru-s partner in the educational adventure, was of two types. One, who paid fees to the Guru was known as acharya-bhaga, the other, who learnt by doing domestic chores in guru's house etc. was described as dharma-shishya.

Manu records instructions on how a disciple should behave in guru's presence, as also in the latter's house. For example, he mentions that a disciple should eat and wear dress in a manner inferior to his guru's. He should go to bed after the guru has done so, and should wake up earlier than the guru. He should be obedient and should not sit on a level higher than the guru's seat. He should not imitate guru's



walk or talk etc. He should not listen to criticism of his guru. If it falls on his ears, he should shut his ears and go away from the place.

Interestingly, Boudhayan also lays down that, in case the disciple notices incorrect behavior on the guru's part, the former should conscientiously talk to the guru - though in solitude. (प्रमादानाचार्यस्य बुद्धिपूर्वकं वा नियमातिक्रमं रहसि बोधयेत्) There are some who advocate flat denial to obey wrongful commands by the guru.

Post-training contacts with the guru were encouraged and sometimes the disciple married the guru's daughter - even though the custom had obvious incestuous overtones.

A Chhatra is generally understood as one who lives with the guru i.e. under his 'umbrella' i.e. protection and this is not far off the mark. However a traditional definition throws up a surprise as it says: छत्रं गुरोदोषाणामावरणं ततः शीलमस्य इति (A chatra is one who covers, conceals defects of a guru.)

Chhatra-s have of course been classified. One category is the dand-manav. According to Patanjali he is the one whose training in Veda-s has not yet commenced. According to *Tatvabodhini* he is the one whose sacred thread ceremony has not yet taken place. *Matang-jatak* has an interesting variation to offer: the term refers to those children who play in the ashram with a stick treating it as a horse! Obviously they are very young. The sabrahmachari is a student who stays with one guru. Antevasi is one who devotes himself to the guru after the sacred thread ceremony with mind, deed and speech. Piturantevasi is a student learning from his father.

Chhatra-s were often identified on other basics such as kaksha (grade), guru, grantha (the studied texts), vedakrama (according to the mode of studying veda-s) and ritu (season in which he attends). For example, according to grantha: agnishtomik, vajapeyik; ritu: varshik (i.e. monsoon), sharadik, haimantik, masik, sanvatsarik and ardhamasik; vedakrama: pathak, kramak.

Acharya is defined variously: मन्त्रव्याख्याकृत् आचार्यः, One who explains mantra-s; यस्मात् धर्मान् अचिनोति स आचार्यः, from whom the shishya learns the dharma; आचार्य कस्मात् आचारं गृह्णाति अचिनोति अर्थात् अचिनोति बुद्धिम् इति वा, one who teaches behaviour, collects shulka-dhan or enriches the intellect of the shishya-s. According to the Manusmriti: उपनीय तु यः शिष्यं वेदम अध्यापयेत् द्विजः/सकल्प सरहस्य च तमाचार्यं प्रचक्षते, one who performs the sacred-thread ceremony of a Brahmin shishya and teaches him veda and upanishad is known as acharya.

Sometimes authors of *vyakarana*, *kalpasutra*, *smriti*, *purana*, *darshana*, *bhashya* etc., were also loosely called acharya.

### **Antecedents, Precedents, Parallels and Alternatives**

Examination of the terminological cluster makes it abundantly clear that guru-shishya parampara has antecedents, precedents, parallels as well as alternatives. Antecedents are prior tendencies, responses etc. which may, or may not be, directly linked to the phenomenon discussed. Precedents are instances of previous happenings of phenomena under discussion (government agencies are generally known to find precedents extremely soul-satisfying!). Parallels point to continuities similar to the phenomenon under consideration but, at the same time, they exemplify a constant adherence to inherent differences. Finally, alternatives constitute a criticism of the prevailing state and, at the same time, creation of new angles, ideas, thought-structures, etc.

In the context of guru-shishya parampara, I suggest that one of the major antecedents was the long process of differentiating between vidya, karu, shilpa and kala. Ashrama, as a concept and related agency, exemplified its precedent. Gurukula and ancient vidyapeeths, functioned as its parallels, while modern Universities and similar other efforts of institutional efforts are steps towards creation of alternatives.

### **Vidya, Karu, Shilpa and Kala**

How does one refer to music? Is it a vidya, karu, shilpa or kala? The question and the suggested differentiation are important matters. These determine the mode in which music is passed on. Generally, guru-shishya parampara is held up as an important proto-type of the process of passing on, transmission or handing-over and hence the matter is significant.

Interestingly, through centuries, the number of accepted vidyas increased and more importantly, the concept became more and more secular and accommodating.

Some of the listings are:

१. आन्वीक्षिकी त्रयी वार्ता दण्डनीतिश्च शाश्वती | (कामन्दकीनीतिसार)
२. त्रैविद्येभ्यस्त्रयीं विद्यां दण्डनीतिश्च शाश्वतीं | आन्वीक्षिकीं चात्मविद्यां वार्तारम्भांश्च लोकतः || (मनुस्मृति)
३. षडङ्गमिश्रिता वेदा धर्मशास्त्रं पुराणकम् | मीमांसा तर्कमपि चेता विद्याचतुर्दश ||

To the fourteen were added medicine, military art, music and polity. Music - i.e. dance, instrumental music and singing was collectively included as devajanavidya from the ancient times and its identification, as a less religion-based expression came

later. With the march of time the term vidya was widely understood as specialized knowledge of any subject. Consequently it became inevitable to define the other three concepts more precisely.

An early differentiation was between Vidya and Kala. A rather intriguing distinction is offered in *Shukranitisara*:

यद् यस्यद् वाचिकं सम्यक् कर्म विद्याभिसंज्ञितम् | शक्तो मूकोऽपियत्कर्तुं कलासंज्ञत्स्मृतम् ॥

'A task which can be undertaken only through speech is vidya and that which can be undertaken even by a dumb person is kala'. The same source adds a twist to the interpretation while identifying two features of kala :

आदानमाशुकारीत्व प्रतिदान विरक्रिया | कलासु द्वौ गुणो ज्ञेयौ द्वे कले परिकीर्तिते ॥

'Speed in taking, but delay in giving - these are the two features of all arts'. The statement does not seem complimentary to gurus! With a little help from Naradiya Shiksha and also with a charitable inclination, it may however be possible to interpret the statement as a recommendation of a teaching technique. The Shiksha says: For self-study employ repetition in fast (i.e., drut) tempo (laya), for performance (prayog) madhyalaya, and for teaching disciples (shikshanam-upadeshartham), vilambit.

Experts have noted that, in spite of some loose application, the listing of sixty-four (the number being somewhat stabilized) arts, and identification of music as an art, was established from the times of *Arthashastra*. During the same period, semantic fields of karu and shilpa on the one hand, and shilpa and kala on the other, were also remapped. The term Karu was confined to tasks dependent on efficient use of manual labour, the term shilpa was used with reference to skilled work. As time lapsed, shilpa came to be reserved for sculpture. The action-content of these four antecedents to sangeet was directed through agencies of ashrama, gurukula and vidyapeetha. The choice of agency depended on the type of music transmitted. Of course, the agency-formats were not mutually exclusive and yet there were perceptible differences - a prominent feature being the diminution of the religious content, while simultaneously, efforts were made to legitimize the secular by investing it with the aura of the sacred.

## ASHRAMA-S

Guru-s, in various periods, chose to operate from their own residence. Students came and often stayed with them to complete training in the chosen field.

The ashrama-s were scattered in the country and preferably located away from the hub of the urban life. Sometimes disciples subsisted on alms collected from surrounding areas, and sometimes guru-s took complete responsibility also for disciples' material well-being.

### **The University Model**

It is obvious that a multiplicity of teaching-learning processes could almost be assumed in India on account of its size and diversity and durability of its cultural traditions. Even though there would be considerable commingling of influences and overlapping of methods, etc. it could be said that Vidyapeeth i.e. university can be identified as a model different from guru-shishya parampara.

Between about 800 B.C. to A.D. 1300, experts have singled out eighteen vidyapeeths for their distinctive contributions to education in India. They are:

- 1) Takshashila (800 B.C. - A.D. 400)
- 2) Nalanda-Vihar (A.D. 400-1200)
- 3) Vikramshila Vihar (A.D. 800-1200)
- 4) Udantapuri Mahavihar (A.D. 700-1200)
- 5) Jagaddal Mahavihar (A.D. 1100-1200)
- 6) Kashi (A.D. 1000-to date)
- 7) Ayodhya (600 B.C.-?)
- 8) Gunsheela Vidyapeeth (600 B.C.)
- 9) Kundinpur (600 B.C.)
- 10) Mithila (A.D. 1100-1500)
- 11) Navadweep / Nadiya (A.D. 1450-1800)
- 12) Vallabhi (A.D. 450-775)
- 13) Kanchi (200 B.C.-A.D. 1300)
- 14) Madura (500 B.C.)
- 15) Salotgi Mandir ( A.D. 1000-1100)
- 16) Tirumukkudal Mandir (A.D. 1100)
- 17) Malakapuram ( A.D. 1100-1300)
- 18) Tiruvoriyur Mandir (A.D. 1300)

In the West, the word University came into vogue after the Thirteenth century. This word replaced the earlier studium generale. In India the current term vidyapeeth was preceded by ashrama, parishad, vihar, math, mandir and ghatika. All the terms, it should be noted indicate religious connotations, though in varying degrees.

What features distinguish a university as a teaching-learning institute? Adding a few more to the features enlisted by Dr. Radhakumud Mukherjee to describe the famous

Nalanda vidyapeeth, we may note the following chief characteristics of the ancient Indian universities.:

- 1) There is a notable variety of subjects taught.
- 2) Subjects were optional in the sense there was choice given to the taught.
- 3) The method was not entirely Indian - as many teachers were from other lands and they followed their own approaches.
- 4) Debating as a modality was regarded extremely important and it was accorded its rightful place in the general pattern.
- 5) The training offered was fairly advanced.
- 6) The students admitted were from different areas and cultures.
- 7) Often examinations were held in public.
- 8) Degrees etc. were awarded to successful students.
- 9) Educational methods were formed and reformed to respond to changing needs.
- 10) There was a purposeful bringing together of many academic luminaries.
- 11) There were efforts to include new subjects, disciplines etc. in the curriculum.

From various accounts some more details about these vidyapeethas can be obtained, and the educational system that emerges impresses one as a well-developed model to cater to a number of cultural needs.

- 1) In Takshashila, rich students enrolling took poor students along and paid their full fees. Poor students were offered freeships and were also paid for their travel after completing the courses.
- 2) Learned female tutors were not rare in Takshashila.
- 3) In addition to vedic studies, Takshashila offered courses in eighteen different subjects including narashamsi and gatha which are known as ancient non-elite musical genres. Students could opt for subjects they liked and hence brahmin studied magic, military science or archery. However, the vidyapeetha was famous for its teaching of medicine, archery, engineering and architecture.
- 4) Nalanda, celebrated through the perceptive writings of Chinese travellers of the calibre of Fa Hien, Huen Tsang, and I Tsingh, had academicians of high-rank acting as dwarapandit to examine those seeking admission to the Vidyapeetha. It had above 10,000 students on its roll and 1,510 teachers. Students were usually admitted when they were about 16 years of age and they were normally required to study for 12 years in the chosen branch of learning. The Gupta kings, the chief patrons of Nalanda, were followers of the Vedic religion however Buddhist studies were generously supported by them in Nalanda. Acharyas from Nalanda were in great demand at other places. Shantarakshit and Kamalashela were, for example, specially invited to Tibet to systematise Buddhist religious studies. Students were required to copy many manuscripts and many languages were taught. It boasted of a big library

called Dharmaganj. I Tsing, in his stay of ten years, copied and translated 400 Sanskrit works into Chinese.

5) Vikramsheela, a vidyapeetha set up in rivalry to the Nalanda, was solely devoted to Buddhist studies. It had 108 Acharyas looking after six vihars. Students were trained individually as also through lectures common to all. Nalanda also used to schedule 100 lectures per day in various disciplines. In fact this seems to be an accepted format. It has been recorded that a special envoy from Tibet came to Vikramsheela vidyapeetha to persuade Atesha, one of the acharyas, to visit and stay in Tibet to organise Buddhist studies there. Convocation ceremonies in Vikramsheela were impressive. The degree awarded was Pandit.

6) Kashi is known for its long-standing tradition of religious and philosophical studies. Bernier, during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, mentions that numerous acharyas were scattered in the city with 10-12 students attached to each. It must be added that individuals functioning as universities is a recurring feature in Indian cultural studies.

7) Ayodhya, a seat of Jain-supported vidyapeeth, was distinguished by its co-educational approach. The co-educational Gunasheela vidyapeeth, had sixty-four subjects in its curriculum for women, including geet, vadya, nritya, natya and udak-vadyam.

8) Kundinpur specialised in imparting training in wrestling. Vallabhi had the distinction of holding a convention in A.D. 454 to finalise a list of 84 texts as the core texts of Jainism. The earlier Jain tradition depended on unwritten 'texts' and was therefore known as nirgranthi. The Vallabhi convention was intended to put an end to confusion about the true nature of Jainism. Curriculum for male students in Vallabi offered 72 subjects including geetam, vadyam, nrityam and pathitam. (This is a separate mention of pathitam as a mode of making music.) It has been generally noted that vidyapeetas devoted to vedic studies, unlike those devoted to Buddhist and Jain, concentrated on fewer subjects and catered to a smaller number of students.

### **Essentials of the Guru-Shishya Parampara Training Method:**

This is the background against which guru-shishya parampara in music crystallized as a method. Obviously it took over different characteristics from other agencies in various degrees. In addition, it also worked within parameters of a larger oral tradition functioning in India.

The teaching model, perfected and used with notable assurance in the guru-shishya parampara, appears to have the following essential features:

1) It relied heavily on using upama (simile) and roopaka (metaphor) for exposition of subjects etc. to be passed on.

2) Narration and quotation of anecdotes was ranked high as an educational device to explain issues and also to set up role-models or patterns of the expected, legitimate and (mostly) pleasurable behavior. Anecdotes were deliberately kept in circulation – with conscious or unconscious modifications. However, their capacity to generate impact can hardly be ignored even today.

3) There was an unmistakable emphasis on establishing similarities between two or more procedures/approaches/processes to explain minutiae, as also to lay down, outlines of recommended action.

4) Samvad - dialogue - was considered essential for successfully establishing a 'one to one relationship' between the teacher and the taught. In this way, teaching-learning process was spared the fate of becoming a series of dry, impersonal and mechanical acts executed to transmit information. The aim was to ensure effectiveness of teaching-learning acts as interpersonal exchanges. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in Nalanda, teaching-learning of all disciplines including Ayurveda proceeded self-study, teaching and through tad-vidya-sambhasha or sandhaya-sambhasha - a mode which may perhaps correspond to symposium.

5) Samanvaya was a well-honed intellectual strategy of arriving at conclusions and preparing action-plans intended to meet demands and views- often divergent. The basic decision was *not* to rule out any idea, thought etc. in its entirety and try for synthesis of established and new positions.

6) While seeking solution to a particular problem, or searching for an answer to a specific question - the effort was to keep antecedents in view. Nothing was treated as completely new, or sudden. The approach was described as pratigamik.

7) Guru-shishya parampara freely borrowed from other formats mentioned earlier. However, the main thrust was to dissociate itself from the overwhelming religiosity which enveloped the earlier modes.

### **Some Deductions:**

1) At this point of time, it is necessary to differentiate between modern and contemporary as historians aptly do. A time-span of about seventy years i.e. a living memory of three generations, is identified as contemporary. The modern period in India is closely associated with the advent of the British rule, new educational system, rise of the (new) middle class and printing-press etc.

2) Guru-shishya parampara needs to be examined as a model developed to transmit across generations material, which is basically intangible. Broadly speaking, the channel or the mode, is utilized to pass on information, skills, knowledge and

insights. Depending on the strength of relationship, one, many or all four will be passed on.

3) Guru and shishya are mutual correlates in a complex process of interchange of influences. As such, the two agencies, namely guru and shishya, are defined chiefly in terms of one another.

4) Like many other socio-cultural institutions in India, guru-shishya parampara has its roots in the religio-sacred vision governing many areas of life. Guru-s are venerated and their roles are customarily idealized because of the generic connections.

5) As a consequence of the overpowering religious associations guru-shishya parampara has been inevitably subjected to numerous socio-cultural pressures seeking to replace religio-sacred orientation with a secular-sacred orientation. The retention of the sacred component appears to be warranted by the ephemeral, significant and obviously intangible value-loaded musical experience. At the same time, a diminished role of the religio-component enables musicians to enjoy freedom to be normal human beings! With the diminution of the religious component, or its intensity, they are able to participate in mundane activities. The long journey from ashrama-phase through gurukula to gharana, and further onto a more mobile guru-shishya parampara is a story of progressive attempts of striking a balance between the religious-sacred on the one hand and secular-mundane on the other (despite the fact that numerous romantic, mystifying and idealistic accounts given, anecdotes are repeatedly recited and occupational mythologies are lovingly created and nurtured!)

6) It is not surprising that on the background of the continued dialectic between the religio-sacred and the secular-sacred, two dominant theological traditions - namely Indian-Hindu and Indian-Muslim - carried out a constant struggle to make the unavoidable transitions from Acharya-chhatra, Peer-Murshid and gurukula prototypes respectively. The resulting institutions are the institutions identified as guru-shishya parampara, ustad-shagird and gharana respectively during the modern period.

7) As has been argued by many experts, the consolidation of Islam during the medieval period compellingly brought forth a bipolarity in religious affiliations in India. Hence, music was (also) forced to take sides or effect a synthesis. Music, due to performing and socio-cultural reasons expectably chose the latter alternative. The resulting guru-shishya-parampara therefore resounds with echoes of the two main religious continuities mentioned earlier.



8) It is also possible to detect one more inherent dialectic in the parampara. From the functions related to it, providing information and imparting skills have fairly tangible goals. However, the other two, namely, passing on of knowledge and leading to insights - are patently non-quantifiable, intangible and subtle. I submit that it is in the nature of the sacred component to facilitate operations linked with knowledge and insight. In contrast the secular proves conducive to passing on of information and imparting of skills with similar naturalness. To picture music and musicians, as solely concerned with one or the other of the pairs, is to attempt building images with no basis in reality.

9) It is necessary to remember that guru-shishya parampara has so far operated mainly in the context of a pervasive Indian oral tradition. As I have argued elsewhere, Indian oral tradition has its own unique features and it can hardly be confused with oral traditions of pre-literate societies. Briefly, the chief nine features of the Indian oral tradition are: 1) prestige of the 'word'; 2) emphasis on oral as well as aural; 3) co-existence with the written; 4) guru; 5) the sootra way; 6) memory and the oral tradition; 7) ritualism 8) prestige of sound as a principle; 9) multiplicity of communicators.

These features are directly reflected in processes of teaching, practice, performance, propagation and preservation of Hindustani music. For example, the importance of the word of mouth has relegated music notation to a secondary place. Appreciation of musical behavior, as an essentially oral-aural phenomenon, has resulted in evolution of techniques of 'listening' as opposed to 'hearing'. Coexistence with writing and the written, has culminated in the practice of maintaining skeletal, though carefully prepared records of musical material. The guru and his supremacy have become legendary characteristics and their presence is felt in everything related to music, though consequences are sometimes appropriately questioned! The sootra way has dominated musicians communication in almost every music-related activity. The high ranking accorded to memory has helped developing music-related mnemotechny of considerable complexity and achievement to its credit. Ritualism has found a place as a major strategy employed to ensure coordination of musicians psycho-physiological energies. Prestige accorded to nada-principle has influenced song-texts as well as many areas of theoretical thinking and formulation of practice-procedures. And finally, at least till the recent past, multiplicity of music-communicators was a force that shaped areas of specialization in music.

The nature of Performance as a phenomenon is to be kept in view while discussing the guru-shishya parampara. One may also raise the question: is there anything specifically Asian about this educational model?

## From Here...

The conceptual-cultural ground covered so far would take us to more technical, structural and methodological details vis-à-vis Hindustani art music. From here one could move to some questions such as:

- 1) How does guru-shishya parampara approach the problem of music-worthiness of the taught and the teacher? Is there any scope for including aptitude-testing and other such modern methods to avoid wastage in terms of human efforts?
- 2) Is guru-shishya parampara able to provide for prodigies as they are potentially highpoints of human achievement?
- 3) Has guru-shishya parampara geared itself up to meet demands of more inquiring minds from Indian as well as from abroad? Or is it seeking shelter under a weakening influence of a self-indulgent mystification?
- 4) To what extent has guru-shishya parampara understood and accepted the diminishing importance of vocal music compared to instrumental music-making?
- 5) Has the Parampara systematic answers to every aspect of music-making? For example, have its scholastic and performing traditions paid attention to voice-culture (and not voice-production), instrument-making, changing priorities of acoustic dimensions etc.?
- 6) To what extent has the Parampara recognized the new equations between culture studies and music-studies? A related question would be: can guru-shishya parampara provision to encourage enable and enrich non-performing music-related disciplines such as music-therapy or is it to continue as performance-teaching alone? Further, social conditions in education display today a remarkable degree of horizontal and vertical inter-class mobility. Can guru-shishya parampara fulfill the new and specific demands?
- 7) Is guru-shishya parampara plagued by a regressive attitude with respect to emerging technologies and techniques of communication?
- 8) From the structural components generally identified as raga, tala and shabda has the guru-shishya parampara failed to achieve new integration required by new awareness of audiences as receivers?

Perhaps this octave-experience is the appropriate point to take and give a breather- to all who have suffered with me!